

We believe that giving taxpayers the freedom to determine how their welfare dollars are spent will spur interest in antipoverty efforts and enhance the role of private charities. Replacing traditional self-help networks with Government checks has failed.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for the Federal Government to step aside and allow caring individuals and community based organizations to begin attacking poverty in a meaningful way.

I urge my colleagues to take another bold step to change the way Government works and to cosponsor the Common Sense Welfare Reform Act.

RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE TO A DECENT LEVEL

(Mr. EVANS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, the same old story still applies: The harder working Americans work the farther they fall behind. That is why it is so important to raise the minimum wage to a decent level.

The Republican response to this problem is to argue that trickle down proposals will create better paying jobs.

But corporate welfare does not lift all boats equally.

Business Week has pointed this out in an article called "Plumper Profits, Skimpier Paychecks."

According to this article, only 81 percent of corporate incomes go to salaries and benefits,

The lowest since 1969.

Corporate America needs to adopt a new social contract with its workers, and so does the Republican Party.

The first step is to support a fair and livable wage for all Americans.

SUPPORT THE VIOLENT CRIMINAL INCARCERATION ACT

(Mr. JONES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I spoke about Kermit Smith, the individual who spent 14 years on death row for the brutal kidnaping, rape, and murder of a college cheerleader in North Carolina. However, I forgot to mention that he was on parole during the time of the murder. Two years prior, he was convicted of a violent crime and spent 1 year and 8 months in prison—less than 50 percent of his sentence.

According to the Justice Department, a violent criminal serves roughly 42 percent of his prison term which breaks down to an average of 24 months in jail.

The American people are fed up with this. Congress needs to send a strong message to criminals. We must increase the amount of time spent in prison. Criminals must receive harsh

punishments, not merely a slap on the wrist.

The Violent Criminal Incarceration Act does exactly this. It allows States to strengthen its sentencing policies by providing grants to expand prisons. Let us work together to put these violent criminals away and end the revolving door policy at our prisons.

SUPPORT SLAUGHTER AMENDMENT TO H.R. 667

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, how many more headlines like these do we have to read, and how many more times do we have to hear about a sexual predator who was released from jail and then terrorized new victims?

Just yesterday, the New York Times and the New York Post reported another instance of where a paroled rapist returned to his former tactics. According to the reports, the New York police had just arrested Johnny Rosado for 8 rapes in 1 month. He had been out of jail for a year. All that time he was visiting his parole officer and attending required rape counseling sessions.

But the parole officer and the counseling provided no protection for 8 victims, women between the ages of 16 and 28.

What is worse, Mr. Speaker, is the parole officers in the State of New York did not want to let Johnny Rosado go free at all. He was denied parole four times before being released on good behavior because there were no women or children to rape in prison.

The State parole board told reporters, "Under our law, he was held as long as he could be. There was nothing we could do."

If that is the best we can do, Mr. Speaker, we need a new law. I urge my colleagues to support my amendment to H.R. 667 later today so that States will not allow second-time sex offenders to go free to pounce again.

THREE-FIFTHS MAJORITY PROTECTION AGAINST TAXATION

(Mr. SOLOMON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, the tax-and-spend Democrats are at it again. They are suing us Republicans, do you believe it, to overturn our rules change that requires a three-fifths majority vote to raise taxes. Can you believe it? These Democrats will stoop to anything to continue their hell-bent-for-leather ways of taxing and spending this Nation into bankruptcy.

Mr. Speaker, you tell them for me, it is not going to work. Article I, section 5 of the Constitution, read it, clearly gives us the right to set the rules of this House.

The three-fifths majority vote to raise taxes will stand as a hindrance to any Democrat attempt to foist more

taxes on the American people. There ain't going to be any more.

BIPARTISAN APPROACH NEEDED FOR WELFARE REFORM

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, the key test of any welfare reform is how quickly and how effectively people on welfare move into work. The main objective must be not to penalize children but help put to work their custodial parent and hold both of their parents responsible for their welfare.

According to press reports, Republicans are unveiling their welfare reform plan this morning. I have two major concerns, among others. One is that it appears that the Republican proposal will be strong on punishing children and will be weak on getting their parents into work.

Washington, our responsibility is more than just doing this, punting, paying, and then praying.

I favor State flexibility, but this must be within a new partnership with the States.

A second concern I have is the lack of bipartisanship. The Republicans are making the same mistake as the Democrats did on health reform, going it alone. As we on the Human Resources Subcommittee begin to mark up the bill next week, I hope there will be a more bipartisan approach. Welfare reform deserves it.

THIS CONGRESS IS DOING THE BUSINESS OF THE PEOPLE

(Mr. HOKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, for the first time in a long time, Congress is setting records that it can be proud of, and records apparently the American people are proud of, too, by the result of a poll that was released last week indicating that the approval rating of Congress has doubled in the last month.

In only 36 days, the House has gone from being a do-nothing Congress to being a can-do Congress. We are working hard to keep our promise to produce real changes, and we are moving forward at a record pace.

In the first 36 days, this Congress has spent more hours in session, taken more votes on the floor, held more committee meetings, and reported more legislation than any previous Congress in at least 15 years. We have passed seven major bills, and contrary to the sniping that you might hear from the other side and the impression that it might create, every single one has been passed with broad, broad bipartisan support including, in some cases, every single Democrat as well as every single Republican voting in favor of those bills.